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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. COOKSEY].

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
June 17, 1997.

I hereby designate the Honorable JOHN COOKSEY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 21, 1997, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority and minority leader limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DOGGETT] for 5 minutes.

THE SUNSET ACT OF 1997

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, watching the sun rise over this Capitol each morning is a truly beautiful sight. The white marble on this building shines radiantly in the morning, and yet I think the same is also true with the birth of many Federal programs. There is usually great joy at the sunrise of a new Federal law to meet a genuine need across the country. But sometimes an initiative fails to fulfill its promise. Sometimes a new Federal program has unintended consequences either through misinterpretation by the

courts or misapplication by the bureaucracy. Somewhere between the Potomac and the Rio Grande, some Federal efforts that began as a bright shining idea get so misdirected that many Americans get only a bad sunburn.

Well, Congress we know is great at creating Federal programs because we have hundreds of them to prove it. But too often after creating a program to address some real need, Congress subsequently fails to conduct proper oversight of its handiwork. It has been said that the nearest thing to immortality in this world is a government bureau, and certainly that is true of too many of the programs that were created in the sunrise in this particular institution. We find the sun coming up on these programs, but seldom seeming to go down.

In my home State of Texas, we found a solution for too much government sun. We forced periodic review of each new governmental initiative through a systematic sunset process. This procedure is authorized by the Texas Sunset Act, which I authored as a Texas State Senator. Through that process we have completed over 200 sunset reviews, performance audits of various State agencies. We have repealed statutes, we have consolidated and abolished governmental agencies, and the Texas Treasury is about \$600 million the better for it.

In Texas, we believe that a thorough bottom-to-top review of each of these new laws and programs is healthy. It is good for the programs, it is good for those that are administering the programs, but most importantly, it is good for the people that have to foot the bill, the taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, I have found that when it comes to solving problems here in Washington, we could do with a little more Texas thinking of this type. So today I am introducing a bill that will bring this proven Texas concept to the Halls of Congress.

In my judgment, the Congress has an affirmative duty to oversee every program that it creates to ensure accountability, to ensure that over time the program is being retained only if it is necessary and only if it is being run in an efficient way that protects the taxpayer.

The Sunset Act of 1997, which I am introducing here today, would fulfill this duty by requiring Congress to review and reauthorize most programs at least once during every decade, if not sooner. There are Federal programs that are not being reviewed today that have not been formally reauthorized for many years. This is not any way to conduct the Nation's business, for it undoubtedly results in the outright waste of resources that could be better used to reduce the deficit and address our real needs in education, the environment, and health care.

Mr. Speaker, I advanced this sunset concept, I really advanced it during the recent budget debate, in an effort to ensure that this bipartisan agreement achieves its promise and is not just more wishful thinking. Unfortunately, those who control this House rejected the idea of a sunset guarantee to assure that today's political promises actually achieve some reality.

The Sunset Act of 1997 that I am introducing today is another way of accomplishing responsible government that addresses real needs within the restraint of a budget that is balanced and stays balanced. I urge my colleagues to approve the Sunset Act of 1997 as a way to bring about needed oversight to this government and assure that unnecessary programs are terminated and that all parts of our government are operated with true accountability and efficiency.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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